

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AF-10 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 /107 W
-----001531 261545Z /46

R 261355Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5306
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TUNIS
AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L TRIPOLI 0447

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, LY, UR, PINS
SUBJECT: SOVIET VIEWS ON LIBYAN INTERNAL SITUATION

1. ON MARCH 25 AT SOCIAL GATHERING NEWLY ARRIVED SOVIET
EMBASSY COUNSELLOR YURI SOULTANOV ENGAGED ME IN CONVERSATION
ON CURRENT LIBYAN POLITICAL SCENE.

2. SOULTANOV ASSERTED THAT SITUATION WAS VERY UNCERTAIN
AND THAT QADHAFI'S POSITION WAS INCREASINGLY SHAKY.
ADMITTING THAT HE WAS A NEW ARRIVAL BUT CLAIMING TO HAVE
SENSITIVE POLITICAL ANTENNAE AS A RESULT OF MANY YEARS
EXPERIENCE IN ARAB COUNTRIES, SOULTANOV SAID HE COULD SENSE
SOMETHING WAS SERIOUSLY AMISS IN LIBYA.

3. I OBSERVED THAT PERIODICALLY RUMORS CIRCULATED ABOUT
QADHASD'S ALLEGED DIFFICULTIES AND THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT
TO DISCERN ANY ORGANIZED OR EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION TO
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QADHAFI. MOREOVER, MOST DIPLOMATS HAD LITTLE CONTACT WITH
REGIME AND THUS NOT IN POSITION TO EVALUATE ITS STRENGTHS
OR WEAKNESSES. PERHAPS SOVIETS WITH BROAD AND ONGOING
CONTACTS WERE BETTER QUALIFIED TO MAKE JUDGMENTS.

4. SOULTANOV ACKNOWLEDGED WIDE CONTACTS PARTICULARLY IN
LIGHT OF SOVIET MILITARY SALES. HE CLAIMED, HOWEVER, THAT

THIS IN NO WAY PROVIDED INTIMATE ACCESS TO TOP LEADERSHIP.
SOULTANOV SAID HIS ASSESSMENT OF REGIME'S CURRENT DIFFICULTIES WAS BASED PRIMARILY ON RECENT FACTUAL DEVELOPMENTS. HE CITED QADHAFI'S MOSQUE SPEECH (TRIPOLI 0312), PUBLICATION AND ADVOCACY OF GREEN BOOK PARTICULARLY VIEWS ON HOUSING, HARSHER APPLICATION OF MILITARY CONSCRIPTION PROGRAM, AND HARASSMENT OF MILITARY OFFICERS. ALL OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAD COMBINED TO GREATLY INCREASE GENERAL UNREST AND OPPOSITION TO QADHAFI. OPPOSITION, HE AGREED, WAS AS YET UNORGANIZED BUT INCLUDED ELEMENTS OF OFFICER CORPS WHO WERE BASICALLY MIDDLE CLASS IN OUTLOOK. SUCH WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION COULD QUICKLY ORGANIZE. MEANWHILE, HE OBSERVED, QADHAFI'S PROONENTS WERE FAR FROM WELL ORGANIZED AND NOT PARTICULARLY EFFECTIVE IN CARRYING OUT QADHAFI'S PROGRAMS.

5. I AGREED THAT SOULTANOV'S POINTS WERE PERSUASIVE BUT BELIEVED THAT QADHAFI WAS QUITE ADEPT AT TAKING CARE OF HIMSELF. SOULTANOV'S ASSESSMENT IS IN FACT PRETTY MUCH IN LINE WITH THOSE OF BETTER INFORMED EMBASSIES IN TRIPOLI (INCLUDING THIS ONE) THOUGH CONCLUSIONS VARY. INTERESTING QUESTION, OF COURSE, IS WHY SOULTANOV CHOOSES TO PASS ALONG THIS DISPARAGING LINE TO U.S. AND OTHER DIPLOMATS HERE. POSSIBLE, OF COURSE, THAT SOVIETS ARE GENUINELY CONCERNED AT INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS AND/OR ARE HAVING SERIOUS POLICY DIVERGENCIES WITH LIBYANS ON MIDDLE EAST
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OR AFRICA. WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY MOSCOW VIEWS.

6. MEANWHILE, SOULTANOV IS PROJECTING HIMSELF AS ACTIVE OUTGOING MEMBER OF TRIPOLI DIPLOMATIC CORPS WHO, UNLIKE HIS PREDECESSOR, PLANS TO FIND AN APARTMENT OUTSIDE OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY AND PARTICIPATE FULLY IN CORPS SOCIAL LIFE.

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